

USS COONTZ (DLG-9) COMMAND HISTORY FOR 1966

1. CHRONOLOGY OF HIGHLIGHTS

- 24 JAN Completed conversion of COONTZ helicopter landing and handling capabilities.
- 29 JAN Departed San Diego for Western Pacific, Commander C. W. CUMMINGS, commanding, Commander Destroyer Squadron 17, one UH-2B helicopter and Helicopter Support Squadron 1, Detachment 5, embarked.
- 30 JAN Helicopter damaged at sea.
- 14 FEB Shift operational control of Commander SEVENTH Fleet.
- 25 FEB Southern Search and Rescue (SAR) Station in Gulf of Tonkin
THRU
9 MAR as part of TE 77.0.1.2.
- 1 MAR Awarded Vietnam Service Medal.
- 17 MAR Helicopter Support Squadron 1, Detachment 9 relieved Detachment 5.
- 31 MAR Northern Search and Rescue/Anti-Air Warfare (SAR/AAW) Station
THRU
30 APR in Gulf of Tonkin as part of TE 77.0.1.
- 27 APR Commander Cruiser-Destroyer Force, Pacific, Admiral W. H. BAUMBERGER aboard.
- 15 MAY
THRU
18 MAY In port, Shimoda, Japan, for Black Ship Festival.
- 28 MAY Helicopter Support Squadron 1, Detachment 23 aboard and relieved Detachment 9.
- 30 MAY SN Daryl Dean GREEN, USN, lost at sea.
- 31 MAY Search and Rescue/Anti-Air Warfare (SAR/AAW) Northern Station
THRU
1 JUL in Gulf of Tonkin as part of TE 77.0.1.
- 14 JUN Vectored USS RANGER aircraft for kill of enemy aircraft.

1 JUL Attacked by three North Vietnamese PT boats. Boats were sunk by aircraft under COONTZ control. 19 prisoners were taken aboard ship.

9 JUL Commander CUMMINGS, RD1 (b) (6) and RD1 (b) (6) awarded the Navy Commendation Medal.

23 JUL Departed Yokosuka, Japan for United States with USS HANCOCK, USS ROGERS, USS HOPEWELL and USS O'BANNON.

25 JUL Operational control shifted to Commander FIRST Fleet.

1 AUG Returned to homeport after six months in Western Pacific.

29 SEP Entered Long Beach Naval Shipyard for overhaul.

6 DEC USS COONTZ awarded Unit Commendation Ribbon for her WESTPAC performance.

2. BASIC NARRATIVE

At the commencement of 1966, U.S.S. COONTZ (DLG-9) was berthed at the Naval Station at San Diego, California. The finishing touches were being applied to a new helicopter landing and handling platform being installed on the fantail. The conversion being accomplished by the Campbell Machinery Company, included the relocation of all after deck vents and clearing fantail obstructions. In addition, the alterations included installation of a JP-5 fueling and purification system and electrical starting unit. COONTZ was the first ship of her class to receive this particular conversion adding the manned helicopter feature to her already complicated and diversified capabilities.

During January, COONTZ participated in a two day fleet exercise and conducted her Operational Readiness Inspection. This short period at sea following the helicopter platform alteration and a two month availability at the Long Beach shipyard provided very little work-up period for the long deployment ahead.

As of the start of the year, COONTZ had a full complement of 22 officers and 362 enlisted men. The ship was under the operational control of Commander, FIRST Fleet.

The ship departed her homeport, San Diego, on 29 January with Commander C. W. CUMMINGS of (b) (6) in command. The ship is the flagship for Commander Destroyer Squadron SEVENTEEN, Captain E. L. FOX of (b) (6), and his staff of 5 officers and 6 enlisted men. As no carrier service was available to transport the new UH2 helicopter, the aircraft was placed on the top of the missile house on the 01 deck aft for the trip to WESTPAC. Detachment 5 of Helicopter Support Squadron ONE was also embarked. This unit consisted of two pilots and 12 supporting enlisted ratings.

On 30 JAN, one day out of port while enroute to HAWAII, the missile launcher spun out of control and damaged the tail section of the helicopter. The damaged aircraft was off-loaded at Pearl Harbor for repairs.

COONTZ arrived on station in the Gulf of Tonkin on the 23rd of February following short fuel stop at Midway, Guam and Subic Bay. Her primary duties were Search and Rescue (SAR) and Anti-Air Warfare (AAW) patrolling off the coast of North Vietnam. While on station the first time under the operational control of U.S. SEVENTH Fleet, COONTZ became eligible for the Vietnam Service Medal. On the 17th of March Detachment 9 of Helicopter Support Squadron 1 relieved Detachment 5. Detachment 9 included 2 officers and 10 enlisted men.

Being the first ship of her class to deploy with a UH-2 helicopter, COONTZ was anxious to try out her new capability. A total of 5 downed pilots were rescued during the 6 month cruise. In addition, 200 successful landings and launchings were completed without incident.

On March 27th, Commander Cruiser-Destroyer Force, Pacific, Admiral W. H. BAUMBERGER, while visiting his fighting ships in the war zone, spent a day aboard the COONTZ for a general inspection tour.

Almost the entire month of May was spent in transit and training. Plus inport visits to Yokosuka and Shimoda, Japan.

From 20-24 May COONTZ and USS ROGERS (DD-876) participated in the Black Ship Festival at Shimoda, Japan. This years' festival marked the 27th annual celebration commemorating the landing of Commodore Perry with his squadron of black ships in 1854 and the opening of Japan for trade with the United States. After leaving Shimoda, on the way back to YANKEE Station, via Subic Bay, P.I., COONTZ received Helicopter Detachment 23, with 2 officers and 8 enlisted men.

On Memorial Day, tragedy struck when Seaman Daryl Dean GREEN was reported missing from quarters. After many hours of searching by ship and support aircraft and retracing our route, GREEN was declared missing at sea.

Back on station in June was routine until the 15th when 2 unidentified aircraft were picked up on radar coming from the coast of North Vietnam. Immediately two F4 Phantom Jets were ordered from USS RANGER (CVA-62). The enemy aircraft were engaged and one kill was recorded marking the first ship control of friendly aircraft to a successful intercept with enemy planes since World War II.

The action did not stop there. On the first day of July, while being relieved on station, three high speed contacts were sighted by returning attack aircraft and were picked up on the ship's surface radar. The contacts were identified as hostile PT boats. All three were sunk by aircraft from the carriers CONSTELLATION and HANCOCK which were controlled by COONTZ. During the action COONTZ in company with USS KING, USS ROGERS, and USS GURKE remained within gun range of the craft but outside of the enemy torpedo range. The guns were not needed however as enemy torpedos were fired at the formation but appeared to run well short. A total of 19 survivors were taken aboard COONTZ. This action resulted in the first North Vietnamese Navy prisoners of the Vietnamese conflict.

After this exciting tour COONTZ proceeded to Subic Bay, P. I. enroute to Kaoshuing, Formosa for a well deserved rest and some relaxing liberty. While in Tiawan Bay, Kaoshuing, ceremonies were held on board to present the Navy Commendation Medal with Combat "V" to Commander CUMMINGS, RD1 (b) (6) and RD1 (b) (6) for meritorious achievement in combat operations, namely the vectored intercept and eventual kill of enemy aircraft.

Ten days ^{later} in Yokosuka, Japan a similar ceremony was held awarding to Commander CUMMINGS the Bronze Star and to RDC (b) (6) the Navy Commendation Medal. Both awards were presented on the basis of superb action against enemy forces during our P.T. boat incident of 1 July.

Upon completion of a highly successful tour of duty during her WESTPAC deployment, COONTZ returned to her homeport at San Diego, California following six months of combat operations. During the 184 day cruise, a total of 52 underway replenishment were completed, nearly all of them at night.

The USS COONTZ steamed back to the United States in company with USS ROGERS to be greeted by many family and friends. Shortly after returning COONTZ and all personnel on board was awarded the Navy Unit Commendation ribbon for outstanding performance in the Western Pacific war zone.

After 2 months of leave and upkeep perior in San Diego, COONTZ entered the Long Beach Naval Shipyard for regular overhaul. The ship entered drydock following a 1081 day period from the previous drydocking. While in the shipyard several main modifications and alterations were planned. They included:

- a. Test Reliability and Maintenance Modification (TRAM), the last word in sonar.
- b. Extensive modification to the Terrier Missile system.
- c. Communications Standardization and Improvement Package.

While under the operational control of Commander FIRST Fleet, the COONTZ was attached to Destroyer Division 171 within Destroyer Squadron 17.